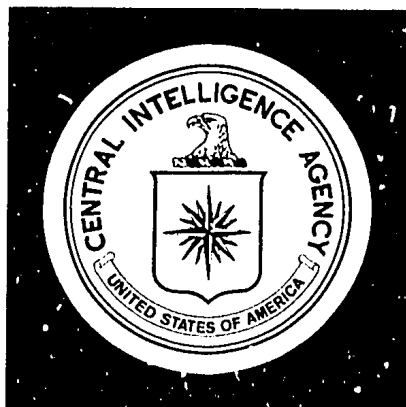


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Brazil: The Selection of a President

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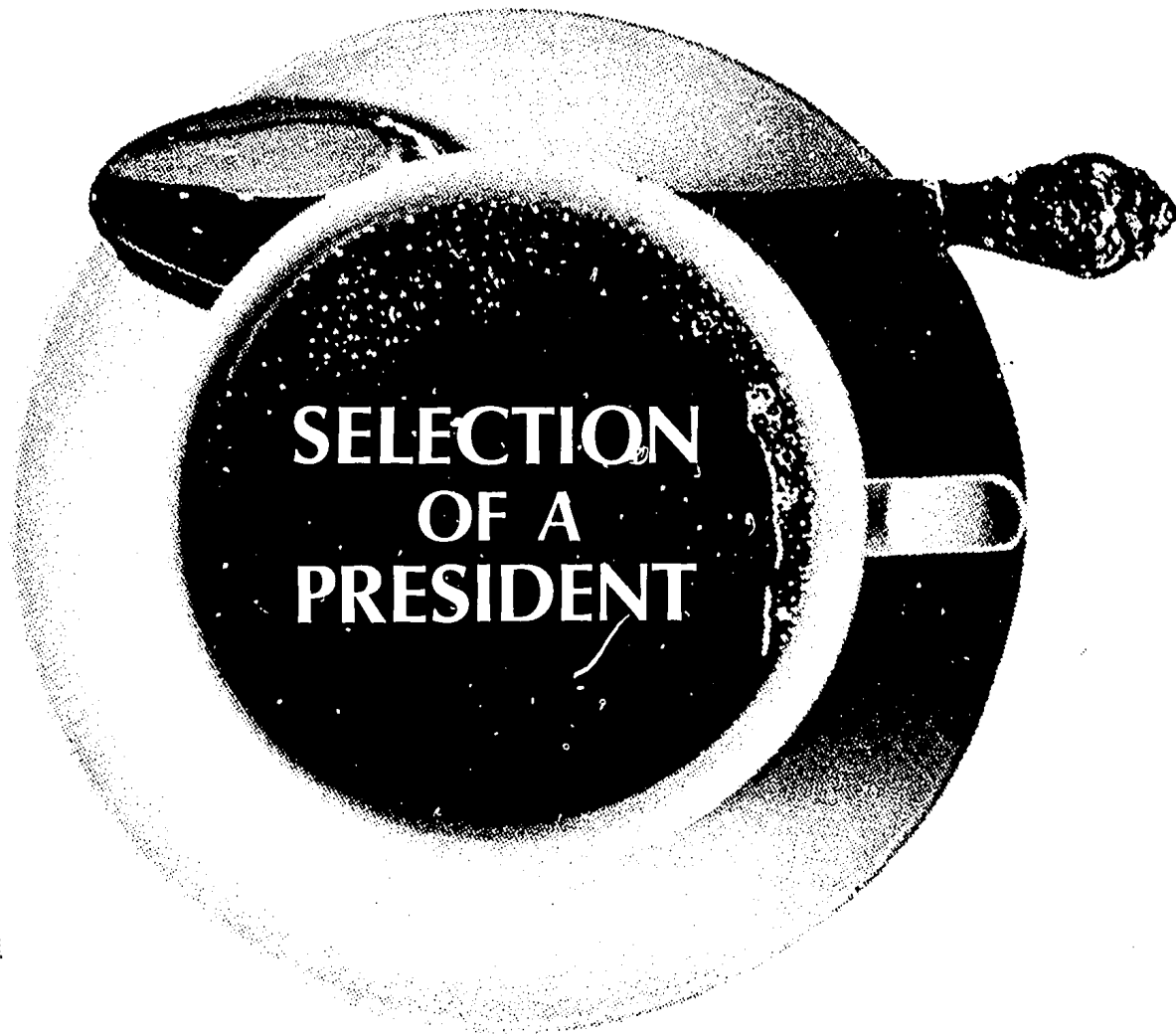
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The major political challenge facing President Emilio Medici in coming months is the need to arrange for a successor. Although his term does not end until March 1974, potentially divisive behind-the-scenes maneuvering by ambitious generals has already begun and may prompt Medici to name his man long before then.

Succession is a problem as the military-backed governments since 1964 have not institutionalized the presidential selection process. This means that the President and the most senior military officers, whose views and attitudes differ, must somehow agree on a choice. Failure to reach agreement or the selection of a man who proves inadequate to the job could disrupt the country's political stability.

President Medici
1969—



President Castelo Branco
1964—66



President Costa e Silva
1966—69

Presidents of military backed governments since 1964

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It is almost certain that only an active duty or retired general will get the nod. Moreover, he must have four stars, at least by the time he takes office, to avoid the hierarchical strains of full generals being commanded by lesser generals. The military are convinced that only one of their own can carry out the development and national integration programs they have started. They firmly believe that only a man with a military background will possess the integrity, technical know-how, and discipline to do the job. The officers are still not ready to return the decision-making machinery to civilians, whom they blame for the corruption, inflation, and economic failures that helped prompt their intervention in 1964. Moreover, since the military have a monopoly on the disposition of force and have severely curtailed all civilian institutions, there is no way for a civilian to launch a viable candidacy.

Succession Since 1964

When the military assumed power in 1964, they sought among their ranks a leader who was uncompromised politically and was both respected by and acceptable to diverse military factions. They found such a man in Humberto Castelo Branco, army chief of staff, who had led the Brazilian contingent in Italy in World War II and was known as a military intellectual. He was among the leaders of the 1964 revolution and had worked successfully with generals who held widely differing views. The Supreme Revolutionary Command had little difficulty in agreeing on Castelo Branco, who was then formally elected by Congress.

His successor, War Minister Costa e Silva, actively sought the presidency. He maneuvered skillfully to line up support, while remaining outwardly loyal to Castelo Branco. Costa e Silva was evidently astute enough to perceive a delicate balance within the army between his supporters and those of the President and studiously avoided taking a stand on most issues. Costa e Silva managed to emerge as the unity candidate of the armed forces, and he was elected by Congress in October 1966.

In August 1969, Costa e Silva suffered a stroke. A junta of the three armed forces cabinet ministers took over, bypassing the civilian vice president. When it became clear that the President would not be able to resume his duties, the junta convoked the military high command, dominated by the army, to choose a successor. The high command agreed on Medici, then commander of the Third Army and former chief of the National Intelligence Service. Medici reportedly neither sought the office nor encouraged anyone else to seek it for him. His selection was largely due to an excellent military record and his reserved personality, which made him acceptable to a broad sector of the armed forces. The early agreement also avoided the threat to military unity that would have been posed by prolonged maneuvering among generals ambitious for the top job. There are indications that Medici, when he sensed less than total support among the generals, has not hesitated to remind them that he accepted the post reluctantly and only to preserve military unity.

Medici's Present Position

Medici, remembering Castelo Branco's failure to plan the succession, is determined not to repeat that mistake. He is also aware that there is much behind-the-scenes maneuvering by generals who desire the presidency for themselves or for favored colleagues. Months ago, he moved to prevent open debate that might promote or exacerbate divisions within the military or harm the chances of any candidate. He also wanted to postpone a decision that would, in effect, make him a "lame duck" with a year of his term still left.

Medici has the confidence of the senior commanders and is, therefore, in firm control of the succession and likely to remain so. He is widely respected in the military and among the public. He is seen as highly competent and effective in achieving important national goals; his term of office has brought a reduction of inflation, sustained economic growth, and an apparent end of terrorism. He has consistently kept decision-making within a small group and has not

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25X1 tolerated ineffectual subordinates. The President, through his army minister, moved the military commanders frequently enough to prevent their establishing power bases from which to maneuver politically. He promoted officers who supported the regime. Ever conscious of the need to maintain military unity, Medici has carefully balanced the various factions; e.g., he has appointed followers of Castelo Branco to high positions.

importance, first as chief military adviser to President Castelo Branco, then as a member of the Supreme Military Tribunal, the nation's highest military court. Geisel, like presidents Medici and Costa e Silva, as well as many of Medici's top advisers, is a native of the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

At Petrobras, Geisel has demonstrated again that he is an able administrator and talented manager. Heading that company has undoubtedly given him intimate insights into the nation's development problems and considerable experience in dealing with complicated technical matters.

Like Medici, Geisel is reserved, personally honest, and politically acceptable. Medici is said to regard Geisel highly. He has been described as moderately nationalistic; he favors nationalized public utilities and authoritarian solutions to national problems. A few factors work against him, and they could be significant. One is his age. Born in August 1908, he would be past 65 by transition time and 70 by the end of his term. Also, he is not regarded as an inspiring leader, although the same was once said of Medici. Finally, Geisel's "candidacy" surfaced too soon, giving his opponents a long lead time in working to defeat him. It also provided an early impetus to the succession scramble the President had so urgently hoped to avoid.

The Candidates

Most often mentioned as the successor to Medici is retired General Ernesto Geisel, brother of Army Minister Orlando Geisel. Ernesto Geisel has headed the state petroleum enterprise, Petrobras, since his retirement from active duty in 1969. Geisel, more than any other figure, seems to embody the qualities that the military wants in the next president of Brazil. Basic to these is a long and distinguished military career, spent in a wide variety of command positions that led eventually to the rank of full general. His competence as an officer is acknowledged even by those who oppose his presidential candidacy. Since the military take-over in 1964, Geisel has shown ability in a number of positions of national

Other Possibilities

Almost all the four-star army generals in the Brazilian Army can be considered potential candidates. Indeed, many consider themselves presidential timber and are maneuvering to strengthen their bids for the office. There are several who, measured by the military's criteria, seem particularly well-qualified.

- One is General Artur Duarte Candal da Fonseca, chief of the Armed Forces General Staff and former director of the national petroleum enterprises. Candal was born 63 years ago in Rio Grande do Sul. He was a supporter of former president Costa e Silva and is friendly to the US,

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General (Ret.) Ernesto Geisel



President Medici Confers with
Army Minister Orlando Geisel



A Meeting of the Army High Command

The selection process



General Candal da Fonseca



General Jorge Correa



General Coelho da Frota

Other potential presidential candidates

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but his nationalistic views could be strong enough to make him too controversial.

- Another is the commander of the First Army, General Sylvio Couto Coelho da Frota. A native of Rio de Janeiro, he is 62. Frota is highly respected throughout the army. This respect is reportedly shared by President Medici himself. General Frota is regarded as intelligent, although not an intellectual, and has long been concerned about corruption in the army and the government.

- General Antonio Jorge Correa, chief of training and research for the army, has held several positions in the Armed Forces General Staff and was secretary general of the army. A rising star at 60, he is among the youngest of the possible contenders.

- General Joao Bina Machado, commander of the important Superior War College, is a Rio Grande do Sul native, born in 1908. A supporter of Castelo Branco, the first military president after the 1964 take-over, Bina Machado is regarded as an intelligent and competent professional.

- Two other four-star generals whose names have been mentioned are Breno Borges Fortes, army chief of staff, and Humberto de Souza Mello, commander of the Second Army. Generals Oscar Luiz da Silva and Walter Menezes Paes, commanders of the Third and Fourth armies, respectively, are outside possibilities.

There are two major generals who have a chance, albeit a slight one. Each could receive a fourth star by the time of the transition. The first is Major General Carlos Alberto da Fontoura, director of the National Intelligence Service, which President Medici once headed. Fontoura is one of Medici's closest advisers and as such cannot be ruled out. The other dark horse is Major General Euler Bentes Monteiro, chief of the army budget and finance department. Euler Bentes headed the Northeast Developmental Agency and is considered an expert in the economic problems of that region. The nationalist views of Euler

Bentes also could prove strong enough to render him too controversial.

The supporters of controversial Major General Affonso Augusto de Albuquerque Lima, who has long aspired to the presidency, are still maneuvering in his behalf, but he stands virtually no chance. Passed over for promotion to full general by the high command, he subsequently retired. He is outspokenly nationalistic and a charter member of the hard-line group of officers who advocate very harsh measures against anything and anybody they perceive as a threat to national security. It is highly doubtful that he could generate anything like the needed consensus in the high command, even if he had the requisite four stars.

Prospects

Some things seem fairly certain. One is that once Medici and the high command have designated a successor, his elevation to the presidency is virtually assured, barring death or incapacitation. Only if Medici were to lose the confidence of the senior commanders would his choice be seriously questioned. It would take something very drastic—such as a sharp, prolonged reversal of the economy—to provoke such a loss of confidence.

Another is that while the President and the high command will pick the next chief executive, there is no reason to assume that he will be a carbon copy of the incumbent. Although basic policy directions will probably change little, the new president, whether Geisel or another general of similar mold, will have his own team and his own ideas of how to do things.

In office, he will face a number of persisting and unanswered questions. One of the most basic—whether or how the military will give up the active exercise of power—will have to be addressed or skirted again by the administration. There is as of now no indication that the military establishment is contemplating an early return to civilian rule. The success that the military governments have had since 1964 in moving the economy ahead, in reducing inflation, and in

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restoring Brazil's international credit rating has made the military confident that their policies are sound. Likewise, they probably feel vindicated by the virtual cessation of terrorism, as well as the progress made in such areas as vast road-building projects and large-scale literacy campaigns. Another basic question is how to include in a new or revised constitution the Institutional Acts on which the revolutionary governments have based so many of their actions. Medici has avoided acting either to include all these acts in a new constitution, as some urge, or to do away with them, as some political opponents of the regime

propose. His reason has been that he wishes to avoid the divisive debate the issue would involve if broached formally.

Finally, there is the succession issue itself. Until the selection process is institutionalized, it will continue to present a major political challenge for the government every time a presidential term ends. And every time the issue arises, it brings a threat to military unity and thus to national political stability.

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